



World of DARKNESS

By Bari Karolian

THE POLICE stenographer opened her notebook and began to read in a fast, dry monotone:

My name is Anton Rijak. I am fifty-two years old. I live at 325 West Fifty Second Street, in a theatrical rooming house. I am a com-

poser of music. I make this statement of my own free will.

I have told Inspector Brady that I was a witness to the murder that occurred here today in the small morning hours, that I know how and by whom the crime was committed.

The facts that I can vouch for

Based on a radio script originally written for the CBS radio program *Suspense*

By

ROBERT L. RICHARDS

began at a quarter to midnight last night. I had just heard the bells of Trinity Church strike the hour. I was sitting in my room, thinking, when I heard the footsteps of Nancy Collins coming down the street from the direction of the theater.

She was walking very fast. It was clear to me she was disturbed, and I knew she would want to see me. I heard her key in the front door, her feet clicking down the hall, her knock on the door.

"Come in," I called.

The door opened, and she stood still, breathing harder than usual, her heart beating faster than normal.

"The light switch is to your right, Nancy," I said.

She turned it on, but still said nothing.

"Close the door, Nancy, and tell me your trouble."

"How did you——" she began in that deep, rich voice that had so much warmth in it. "But then, you always know."

"Yes." My dog, Karl, began making friendly little worried sounds in his throat. "Even Karl knows."

She walked over and patted my big German Shepherd on the head. "Hello, Karl," she said. "You're nice. You're both nice. The nicest people I know, or have ever known."

I wanted to put her at ease, to get her to relax, to get that strain out of her voice. "Karl loves you, Nancy. Almost, I think, as much as he loves me."

She continued to pat the dog. "I

know. And I'm going to miss you both——terribly."

"Oh? You're going away?"

"I'm going to marry Danny Farrell, Anton."

"I——see," I said quietly.

"We haven't said much about it yet, Anton. But we've been seeing each other quite a bit. Anton, I love that big redhead so much it hurts every time I think of him. Now he's quitting the stage. As you know, publishing has always been his great love. That's what I wanted to tell you about."

"I——see."

"Anton," she said very quietly, "you've been so good to me, you've helped me through bad periods. I——I've always felt that you liked me——"

"More than that, Nancy. Much more."

"Well, Anton, I——I don't know how to say it."

"You want to talk to me because you are not sure you have made the right decision."

"Yes," she whispered.

This request, as she implied, was not new. She had been coming to me for advice for the three years I had known her. When she got her first part in a Broadway play, she read the play to me and asked how she should interpret the three lines that constituted her bit. Between us, we made it have significance and inner meaning, and she was given a much bigger part in the next.

"To leave the stage now," I said, "just when you are having such a

wonderful success——"

"I hate the stage!" she said sharply.

"But, Nancy, you have a very great talent."

"You can't have a talent for anything you don't like, Anton, and you can't like anything you've had crammed down your throat since you were barely able to talk."

"I see. It is your mother."

"You know how mother is," she said. "Ever since——"

"Listen!" I broke in.

A faint whisper of satin had come to my ears. I concentrated on it. Edna Collins was coming down the stairs.

"She's coming," I said. "Perhaps we'd better postpone this talk."

"No," Nancy said. "It's time I spoke up for myself. I may as well have it out now."

I did not relish the quarrel that was inevitably coming. Edna Collins was a woman with a fixation. She had been a promising actress in her salad days, but a railway accident had scarred her once-beautiful face. When Nancy was born, she determined that the girl should achieve the dramatic heights denied to her. She had devoted all her time and energy to training the girl—to such an extent that her husband had left her.

It was common knowledge that Edna had allowed nothing to come between Nancy and a chance at success. Proper diet, exercise, clothes made exquisitely by Edna's own hands, coaching, coaching, coach-

ing...

"I told her before the performance tonight, Anton," Nancy whispered as Edna's footsteps descending the stairs became clearer. "I've seen her angry before, but never like that. I thought she was going to have a stroke."

"It will pass."

"For a moment she looked——insane. I was really frightened."

The footsteps came to my door. "Come in, Edna," I called.

The door opened, and there was a little moment of silence before she said brightly: "Hello, darling. I thought you might be here. Good evening, Anton."

"Won't you sit down, Edna?"

"Thank you, no. Nancy, you really must come upstairs. If I'm to get your dress ready for the Equity party, I'll have to cut it from the pattern tonight."

"I'm not going to the party, Mother," Nancy said.

Edna's satin robe whispered as she stepped into the room and closed the door. "Now, darling," she said. "We really must be sensible."

"Mother," Nancy said wearily, "do we have to go through all that again?"

Edna's voice became sweetly reasonable. "I'm sorry I lost my temper this evening, Nancy. I know this seems like the only thing in the world to you——love and all——but you simply *can't* walk out of the lead in a hit play if you're ever to be successful."

"I don't *want* to be successful!" Nancy flared. "Can't you get that

through your head?"

"How dare you speak to me like that!"

"I'm sorry, Mother, but it's just no use——"

"After I've slaved and skimped and planned all these years."

"You'll be all right, Mother," Nancy said. "There'll be enough."

Edna's voice rose in pitch. "I'll be all right!" she said bitterly. "I'm not thinking about myself. I've never thought of myself. I've devoted my life to one end, and this is the thanks I get. Why, only last week I drew every penny of my savings from the bank to take out a hundred-thousand-dollar insurance policy on you, so you'd have something for your old age."

"You shouldn't have done that, Mother," Nancy said quietly.

"And now," Edna said furiously, "you want to throw everything away on that hare-brained boy. I won't stand for it!"

"Edna," I said, "if Nancy is in love——"

"You keep out of this," she snapped. Her breath came harder as she turned on me. "I've been watching you, too, Anton Rikak——"

"Please, Mother," Nancy pleaded.

"She wouldn't have anything to do with you," Edna went on. "I've never been afraid of that. But I've seen *you* treasuring every word she gave you, like crumbs. You're in love with her, but you never had a chance, you old fool! And now I'll thank you to keep your long nose out of my affairs!"

"Mother!" Nancy gasped.

Edna's voice had risen to an hysterical pitch, and it continued to rise.

"You leave Nancy alone," she shrieked. "Just leave her alone, hear? You old fool, you old——"

I rose, stepped forward, and slapped her.

She caught a long, shuddering breath. Karl growled, and I snapped my fingers for silence.

"He——struck me," she said unbelievably.

"It was not in anger," I said. "You were losing control of yourself. I didn't slap you hard enough to hurt."

She moved to the door. "Nancy," she said coldly, "come upstairs. We are going to cut out your dress——tonight." She went out, closing the door behind her with deliberation. Her footsteps marched steadily along the hall and upstairs to her room.

Nancy was very quiet. I waited for her to speak.

Finally, she said: "Anton, I didn't know. I'm sorry."

"Sorry?" I said. "No, child, don't be sorry. Be glad. It has been one of my greatest joys, these three years."

"But I've been cruel, unconsciously hurting you."

"Perhaps you'd better go now, Nancy. All the talk and agonizing in the world will never change one fact—it can't be. Go with your Danny, and be happy."

"I'm afraid now," she said, "after that scene."

"There is nothing to fear, Nancy.

Your mother won't hurt you."

"Tonight they couldn't get the curtain down," she said. "I stood there bowing and smiling forever, it seemed. That's a bad omen."

"There are no such things as omens, Nancy."

"Maybe not," she said doubtfully. "Good night, Anton."

WHEN she had gone, turning out the light as she went, I tried to get back to my tone poem. But the chord progressions simply would not come right. Karl came over and put his nose in my lap, and I patted him and tried not to listen to what was going on upstairs in Nancy's room.

But I could not avoid concentrating on the pattern of sound which came to me almost as clearly as if Nancy and Edna were in my own room. Nancy was weeping, and against the sound of her tears was the inexorable counterpoint of the scissors, the deliberate mechanical snipping and crunching of heavy dressmaker's shears, cutting material on a table.

It was obvious, from the weeping and from the deliberateness of the shears, that Edna had won, had convinced Nancy of the folly of marrying Danny.

Then there was a sudden rush of sound from the front door, the footsteps of Danny Farrel plunging down the hall and up the stairs three at a time. I heard knuckles on the door. I listened.

"Mrs. Collins," Danny said in tones of desperate urgency, "you've

got to listen to me!"

"Yes, Mr. Farrel?" Edna said coldly.

"I'm taking Nancy away tonight."

"Oh, no, Mr. Farrel. Oh, no."

"Nancy!" he cried. "Tell her you're going."

"I can't, Danny," Nancy said tearfully. "I just can't. I—I hate myself, but I can't. Let me think tonight. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

After a short silence, there was the sound of the door closing and heavy footsteps coming slowly down the stairs. I went to the door, with Karl brushing lightly against my leg as usual, turned on the light, and opened it as Danny came along.

"Hello, Anton," he said gloomily.

"Come in, Danny," I said. "I'll give you a nightcap. I'd like to talk to you anyway."

He came in and took a chair. I started for the liquor cabinet, and Karl nudged me gently around the chair Nancy had sat in. She had moved it a few inches, so that I should have stumbled had Karl not brought it to my attention. I fixed drinks, gave Danny one, and sat in my accustomed place.

"It seems desperately serious at the moment, doesn't it, Danny?"

He took a loud swallow of his drink. "Yeah, it sure does."

"I don't want to sound like a heavy-tongued philosopher," I said, "but these things usually assume less importance as time passes."

"Oh, I'm no fool," he said impatiently. "I know all that. But we had everything arranged until that—that——"

"Remember, she will be your mother-in-law."

"Yeah," he said wryly, "I hadn't considered that so much. Look, Anton, you know Nancy pretty well. She's damned fond of you, and I know you've helped her more than once. I want to ask your advice."

"I'd be happy to help."

"Yeah, I know. You're a nice guy. Well, look. Now don't get me wrong. I love Nancy more than anything in the world, but a man can take just so much before he does something desperate."

"Yes? And what would this something desperate be?"

"I don't know," he said despairingly, "but I'm almost ready to do it. What do you think about this whole situation, Anton?"

I considered carefully while ice tinkled in Danny's glass. My main thought was for Nancy's happiness, and I felt that a great deal depended on what I said.

I began talking slowly, and with care. I tried to tell him what I had observed of the various patterns of love.

It has been said that the course of true love never runs smooth. That, I believe, is sophistry. I tried to explain to him that if he and Nancy were truly in love they would override all obstacles. Nothing has ever kept two young people in love apart.

"You will meet at the theater tomorrow and make it up," I said, "and you will go away together one of these days, Edna Collins notwithstanding."

"Well, hell," Danny said, "she's

got her side, too, I guess. Maybe she's not such a bad old gal, after all."

"Perhaps I shouldn't tell you this, Danny, but I feel it's in your best interests."

I told him about the earlier scene in my room, and how Edna had sounded like a mad woman.

"And she," I pointed out again, "will be your mother-in-law."

Danny was quiet for a few moments. "Say," he said presently in shrewd tones, "you haven't got a stake in this, have you?"

"Stake? Explain what you mean by that tone of voice."

"I mean you've been making a pitch here for me and Nancy to take off together, but everything you say is tagged by a sour note, something to make me think twice before taking the leap. I suppose you've been doing the same for Nancy. Come to think of it, she's been quoting you a lot lately, supporting her arguments for waiting."

I chuckled. "I'm sorry, my boy, if it has seemed that way to you. You have my blessing, without reservations."

He took another noisy swallow. "Thanks, Anton. I guess I was a kind of heel for raising the question."

"Perfectly natural, Danny. Listen!"

A key rattled in the front door, and footsteps came along the hall, Kay Walker's footsteps. They paused at my door. A knock sounded.

"Come in, Kay," I called.

Danny caught his breath at the

name.

She opened the door, took one step, and caught her breath, too.

"Oh," she said, "Danny."

"Hello, Kay," he said.

"I didn't expect to find you here, Danny. I saw your light, Anton, and thought I'd stop for a little talk."

"Do come in, Kay."

She closed the door and went uncertainly to a chair. She brought a new element into my room. The atmosphere had been gloomy, and rather full of despair as well as a kind of yearning, and Kay's voice when she spoke to Danny reflected these emotions, too. But her mere presence created this new feeling.

It was not exactly a tension, though there was something of tension in it. It was not exactly animosity, though there was something of that, too. Perhaps it was a combination. The air did not crackle electrically, as it is supposed to do when two opposing personalities come together, but those two young people gave off an emanation that was discernible to the senses.

Not one of the five ordinary senses, but one of the others, as indefinable as the sense of weight, or the sense of direction. I could feel it, or divine it, or whatever the word is which describes such an ability.

Perhaps my knowledge of their past relationship inspired the uneasy feeling that made me a little more erect, a little more alert, filled with a premonition that something unpleasant was about to happen. They had been in love, and it had been a

fiery, consuming liaison.

They were each inclined toward the manic-depressive. When they were happy, they were radiantly so; sad, the world was black. They had loved fiercely and possessively—and stormily—until Nancy had become the apex of the traditional triangle.

The three of us sat, waiting some word, some indication of the trend this meeting would take. Karl felt the unease, and whined softly once and put his nose against my ankle.

Kay cleared her throat twice, then spoke as if she were pulling out each word with hot tongs.

"I just heard the news at the theater," she said. "I guess I should congratulate you, Danny."

"Thanks, Kay," he muttered.

"So I will congratulate you, Danny," she said brightly. "I know the words. I remember. I've heard them said. Once, even, they were said to me. They're nice words, Danny. They're splendid, shining words. They got bells on 'em, even. I hope you'll be very happy. Aren't those pretty words, Danny? There's no heartbreak in them, really, is there? Not a bit of heartbreak, if you just look at the words."

Her voice had none of the low undertones of sincerity. It had a ragged, thin gaiety. It had the quality of a shard of glass when you snap it between your fingers.

"Please, Kay," Danny said. "Don't be like this."

"Like what, Danny? There's nothing wrong with me. Not a thing. I'm just wishing you hap-

piness, Danny. And I know you can be happy. I've seen you happy. I've seen you when your happiness was almost too big to be held by even your tall, strong body. It seems a natural thing for me to hope you'll be happy, Danny. The vine covered cottage, no more grease paint, no more curtain calls, and the nursery knee-deep in red-headed kids. Oh, it's a wonderful picture, don't you think, Danny?"

"**KAY!**" Danny burst out. "Stop it! You and I would never have made a go of it. We both know it."

"Oh, pooh," she said in that brittle, rasping tone. "We come down to a definition of terms, Danny. What is 'making a go'? Is it laughing at a silly white cloud that looks lonesome over a lake? Is it hanging a blue picture that matches the drapes? Is it reading the ads in a mail-order catalog? Is it eating hot buttered popcorn on Fifth Avenue at midnight? Is it standing together on the dark bow of an excursion steamer and watching the moon come up out of the sea? Is that making a go?"

"Kay, you're just embarrassing everybody," Danny said.

She laughed lightly. "How could I embarrass friends by doing the polite thing? I'm congratulating you, Danny. Maybe you're lucky. I hope so. I don't believe it, but I hope so."

Danny didn't reply to this.

"I don't believe it," Kay repeated, "because I don't think you love her."

"I don't want to talk about it, Kay."

"Are you afraid to talk to me, Danny? Are you afraid I might remind you of things that would—shake your resolution?"

Danny set his drink down.

"I'm sorry, Kay," he said. He went to the door opened it.

"Wait, Danny!" she said, and jumped up.

He closed the door behind him, and his footsteps faded toward the front door. Kay ran across the room.

"Let him go, Kay," I said. "He's upset tonight."

She stopped. "*He's* upset," she said bitterly. "That's good, that is. I'll kill her, that's what I'll do. I won't let that little scheming, conniving wench have him. She did me out of the lead in the show, and she took Danny away from me. She won't keep him. You just watch!"

"Kay, you shouldn't talk like that," I said.

"Ha!" she snapped. She went through the door and down the hall to her room.

I sat thinking of the undercurrents always circulating among a group of people that have been together for a long time. I was especially sensitive to these currents because of my blindness. I cannot see, and therefore my other senses have become highly developed through the many years in my world of darkness.

And I felt that events of importance were in the making. A fiancée who hated his prospective mother-in-law, and was in turn hated

by her; a girl who hated another girl because she had stolen her job and her man. These are the essential elements of violence.

Another element was added while I thought. It was Thelma Walker, Kay's aunt. She came down the hall shortly after Kay had stormed into her room, and her footsteps stopped at my door. She knocked.

"Come in, Mrs. Walker."

She did, and I noticed again how regal she seemed. Her steps were measured and rhythmic, and her voice had the cold condescension, and the aloof friendliness, of a queen's.

"Mr. Rijak," she said. "My principal concern at the moment is my niece. She is weeping hysterically in her room, and will not tell me why."

I didn't help her. "Yes?" I said.

"I know," she went on, "that you are always in close touch with anything that happens in this house, one way or another. I cannot help Kay unless I know what is troubling her. I know it is late, but your light was on, and I thought perhaps you could help me. What has happened?"

I told her as best I could. I hinted that Kay's and Danny's relations had been more than casual before Nancy came and stole his heart. I related in some detail the scene between Danny and Kay here in my room.

"I see," Mrs. Walker said when I had finished. "You understand, Mr. Rijak, that my sympathies are with my niece. To a very great extent, I might add. That Collins girl will

ruin Kay's life, if given a chance. I propose that——" She broke off abruptly, rose and went to the door. "But never mind. Thank you."

She left, and I tried to add things together into a comprehensive total. But of course this can't be done where human beings are concerned. The unexpected and unpredictable human element is always the factor x.

I listened, concentrating on sounds which my hearing magnifies far above normal intensity. The sewing machine was now running in Nancy's room. Nancy had stopped crying. Kay was reaching the end of her hysteria; her breath was coming more normally.

A new sound came to me. This was a series of dragging footsteps, one foot being pulled after the other, coming down the hall. I recognized these as belonging to the general factotum, Franz, who, as you will see, is by way of being some kind of a mystic. The steps dragged along the hall and paused before my door. I crossed the room, with Karl hugging my side, and opened.

"Did you want to see me, Franz?" I asked.

"No," he said in his heavy guttural voice. "I was just listening."

"Ah?" I had been listening, too, and I wondered what he meant. "To what?"

"Don't you hear it?" he asked slowly. "You hear things very well, better than most people. It is very loud tonight."

"What is, Franz?"

"The beating of the wings," he

said. "They have been close about the house all evening."

I decided to humor him, and close the door as soon as possible without wounding his feelings. "It seems to me I have heard——"

"Are you a good man, Mr. Rijak?" he demanded.

"Why, I don't know, Franz. I try to be."

"I think you are," he said with a kind of urgency. "So I will tell you. You must leave this house. There isn't much time."

"Why, Franz, what is going to happen?"

"If you could hear the wings," he said fiercely, "you would know. The Black Angel with the Bright Sword of Righteousness and Vengeance. Do you think they can escape him?"

"Well, I——"

"No!" he broke in. "They won't, never fear. Don't you know what goes on in this house? Haven't you seen them, with their painted lips and their tinkling rings and bracelets and their vanity and scoffing?"

"You forget, Franz. I am blind. What do you have in that bag? It sounds like tools."

He came back to earth. I could sense his thoughts, pulled by my question away from his Black Angel to his bag.

"Ya," he said, "tools. There is a dripping faucet up in Miss Collins' room. She can't sleep. I have to fix it."

I listened, shutting out all other sounds, searching with my ears for something I had missed. I was suspicious now, ready to attach undue

significance to any happening. But I heard it, a steady *drip-drip-drip* that would be guaranteed to keep awake anybody in an overwrought condition such as Nancy's.

"What's the matter, Mr. Rijak?" Franz asked. "Do you hear it now?"

"No, Franz. I was just thinking I must take Karl for a walk."

"That Karl, he's a fine dog, Mr. Rijak. Ya, take him for a walk, and don't come back, Mr. Rijak. Don't come back."

I heard our landlady, Mrs. Washburn, come out of her apartment and start down the hall towards us. "Franz," she called in her high, whining voice. "Get along with you. Do what you're supposed to, and don't annoy the tenants."

Franz began to shuffle along the hall. "Yes, yes, I do what I am told," he muttered under his breath. "I am a humble servant, and when the time comes, and the Voice speaks, I shall obey."

"Good evening, Mrs. Washburn," I said.

"I hope Franz didn't disturb you," she whined. "You mustn't pay any attention to Franz. He's queer, but he's really harmless, you know."

I could hear Franz still muttering:

"Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans. For this city I will humble unto the dust. And this house will I make a place of weeping and desolation."

"Harmless?" I asked. "Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes," she said with high-

pitched conviction. "Well, good night, Mr. Rijak."

I closed the door, snapped off my light, and let Karl guide me back to my chair. I sat and listened to the dripping faucet, the dragging footsteps of the janitor approaching it, and the snipping of Edna Collins' shears.

THE SHEARS were silenced by Franz' knock, and did not begin again. Edna went into her own room while Franz tinkered with the faucet, and presently I heard her bed creak as she retired. After a certain amount of banging and clanging, the faucet stopped dripping, and Franz dragged down the stairs past my room.

Then all was silent.

Not really silent, of course. Not to the senses of a blind man. Karl was breathing softly and regularly. Mrs. Washburn was snoring gently. Kay tossed restlessly on her bed, Mrs. Walker made no detectable sound, Edna Collins was also quiet, but Nancy was breathing irregularly, turning on her bed.

And over all were the sounds of the house: a creak here, a groan there, the flapping of a curtain, the squeak of a mouse, the patter of rats in the basement.

And the other sound.

I confess that my hair prickled at its roots as I heard, or fancied I heard, the slow beat of giant wings in the night. I am a realist, there is no fear of or belief in the supernatural in me. But still I swear I heard the soft whirring of wings.

First they passed my window, cre-

ating a quiet distinguishable stir in the air. It was as if some giant creature wafted itself slowly around and around this sleeping house, looking, seeking——what?

Around and around, with a majestic but inexorable deliberation, and though I tried with every ounce of willpower, I could not rid myself of the conviction that Franz' Black Angel was circling the house. Now, in daylight, when I know who killed Nancy Collins and why, I am inclined to discount my impression. But in the early, darkest hours of this morning, I knew that it was true.

Danny Farrel broke the spell when he came stumbling through the front door, sounding like a herd of drunken elephants.

Poor Danny! He had sought the timeworn surcease from sorrow and filled himself with alcohol. He staggered up the stairs, into his room, and almost broke his bed in two when he fell on it.

The sounds of his undressing, the thunder of his shoes as he kicked them off, drowned all other noise. There must have been something at this time, which I should otherwise have noticed.

This was when Nancy was killed. I am sure of that.

Covered by the bedlam of Danny's undressing, anyone could have stolen unnoticed into Nancy's room and plunged the dressmaker's shears into her heart. There was plenty of time, for Danny had gone to the bathroom and his snortings and garglings sounded like a colony of walrus.

When he was finally in bed, breathing heavily, the new and terrifying sound filtered to my ears.

There was a steady *drip-drip-drip*, in Nancy's room.

It wasn't the faucet; Franz had fixed that. It differed in tone from the faucet, anyway.

It was heavier, slower. I knew in a flash, don't ask me how, that it was the life of Nancy, beautiful Nancy, dripping away.

I sat motionless, not breathing, concentrating on the house. Perhaps the murderer was not yet back in his room. But I could hear nothing that was not normal and expected. The murderer, then, *had* returned to his room under cover of the racket made by Danny.

I studied all factors of the situation, and decided that the most helpful thing I could do would be to go upstairs, lock Nancy's room and hold the key until the inevitable arrival of police. By this move I would block any attempt of the murderer to look over the scene of the crime by daylight and correct any apparent mistakes, pick up any overlooked clues.

This I did. With Karl pressing against me, I went up the stairs, so quietly you would not have heard me three feet away.

And it was while I was in the upper hall that the incident occurred which caused me to curse my blindness. I could have seen, accused with conviction, but because I have no eyes, I took no action.

The incident was my hearing the whisper, the familiar whisper, of satin in Nancy's livingroom. I had

heard that whisper many times since Edna bought the robe several months ago, and I was certain.

But who will believe a blind man?

By the time I was at Nancy's door, the whisper had passed into the next room. As I stood with my hand on the door knob of Nancy's room, my ears picked up the sound of footsteps mounting the stairs carefully, one slow step at a time. I took my hand away and turned to face towards Kay Walker, for it was she who was stealing silently toward this chamber of death. Karl pressed against my leg, trembling slightly.

The light in the hall must have been out, for Kay was within only a few feet of me when she caught a spasmodic breath, and whispered:

"Anton! What are you doing here?"

"Nancy is dead," I said. "You are too late."

The rest you know.

And so I accuse Edna Collins, mother and murderess. She took out a large life insurance policy, and I am sure you will find that she is named beneficiary in the event she outlived her daughter. She worked all her life to give Nancy a place in the dramatic sun which she herself could not occupy.

Signed.

ANTON RIJAK.

THE stenographer stopped reading, and big, beefy Lieutenant Brady looked around the "parlor" of Mrs. Washburn's theatrical boarding house. He noted the expressions. Kay Walker seemed fairly disinterested,

Franz was vacant.

Edna Collins—

"It's a lie!" she cried, leaping to her feet.

"Please be quiet," Brady said. "Nobody's gonna get in trouble if they don't deserve it. You've all heard the testimony. Does it correspond with your movements at the times mentioned? Not you, Mrs. Collins," he said as she started a protest. "But the rest of you?"

Nobody said anything, and Brady turned to the small, inoffensive looking man at whose feet crouched a calm, dark-eyed German shepherd dog.

"Now, Mr. Rijak, like to ask a couple questions."

Rijak turned sightless eyes in the direction of Brady's voice.

"Certainly, Lieutenant."

"You say you never went into Nancy's bedroom?"

"There was no need," Anton Rijak said. "She was dead."

"And your dog stayed with you all the time? You made a point of that."

The blind man hesitated a moment.

"Yes," he said. "Karl was with me."

At mention of his name, the dog looked up and made a friendly sound. Rijak patted him gently, and the dog put his head back between his paws.

"Then how in the hell," Brady asked crisply, "did your dog get blood all over one side of his coat?"

"Blood?" Rijak asked. His hand explored the dog's back, paused on

a matted, dark stain. "I—don't know."

"Well, I know!" Brady snapped. "You killed her. Not only that, you were kinda cute about it, playing blind man's buff. Look, Rijak, there wasn't any reason for you to go upstairs if the girl was already dead. As you pointed out, she was dead. You ain't God, and you couldn't help it. So you went upstairs and stuck the scissors in her heart. Then, as you were comin' out of her room, the thing you'd figured on happened. Somebody saw you. I don't know what Miss Walker was doing there —"

"I——" Kay Walker began, but Brady waved her to silence.

"As Rijak pointed out, it don't matter, Miss Walker. You were too late."

He swung to face the blind man again. "You were in love with her, and you weren't gonna let anybody else have her. So you stabbed her. There was quite a bit of blood, and some of it got on your dog. You felt the blood on your pants later and changed 'em. You didn't figure it had rubbed off on your dog, so you didn't try to find any on him. Kolinsky!" he called.

The door into the hall opened and a small, dark policeman entered, carrying a pair of trousers.

"Found 'em, huh?" Brady asked.

"Yep, shoved 'way down in back of the closet."

Kolinsky held up the trousers, and everybody looked at the dark, dried stain at knee level on one leg.